

Child Support Report

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT



Vol. 33 No. 3 March 2011

Putting Children First

D.C. Office Drives Into Communities to Reach Out to Customers

By Elaine Blackman

OCSE

Justin Latus

District of Columbia Child Support Services Division

On January 31, a bright yellow van painted with cheerful children and the slogan “Putting Children First” attracted the attention of passersby in the District of Columbia. Reporters also watched as Mayor Vincent Gray cut the ribbon to launch the Child Support Services Division’s aptly named “Outreach Van” parked in front of its office building on 4th Street Northwest.

D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray cuts the ribbon, while Child Support Services Director Benidia Rice (right), Acting Attorney General Irvin Nathan, and CSSD Deputy Director Cory Chandler look on, at the gathering to launch the CSSD's Outreach Van.



“We don’t know if other states have a van like this or not, so we’ll say we’re the first,” joked the Mayor. At an open house after the ribbon-cutting event, the public and the division’s staff checked out the van for themselves.

In her remarks at the opening, Child Support Division Director Benidia Rice thanked the staff for their “stellar efforts” that won the District incentive funds from the Federal government that enabled the division to purchase the van.

Division Deputy Director Cory Chandler says the idea for the van was sparked by seeing various medical vans in communities and thinking, “We can do that!”

“The concept behind our van was to get closer to the community. We knew a van would help us to improve outreach and communication with more customers, especially in the lower-income areas where the largest part of our caseload resides. The van would enhance our other outreach and services in those areas.”

continued on next page

Inside This Issue

Commissioner's Voice: Creatively Connecting with Parents and Families	3
Annual NCSEA Forum: Priorities, Hope and Challenge	4
Child Support and Workforce Agencies Unite to Give 'Job Support' to San Francisco Parents	5
Research in the News	6
State Services Portal: Opening Doors to Next Level of Communication	7
Mobile Web Applications a Growing Trend in Government	8
'Stand Down' Events Serve Veterans in Albuquerque and Dallas	9

Web Link

See the FY 2012 President's Budget Proposal: Fatherhood and Child Support Initiative



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

In addition, says Chandler, “Some of our customers are less sure that the child support agency is there to help the community.”

The van was customized to offer convenience to customers: It has two small offices to allow private conversations with the child support staff person; a waiting area with a couch and TV; and a desk with two laptop computers, a fax and scanner. It is wheelchair-compliant and contains a restroom. The van is connected by satellite to the Child Support Services Division’s automated system, so customers can get up-to-date information on their cases on the spot.

In fact, customers will be able to do much of what they do at the main office, including learn the payment history on their case, change their address, provide updated information on the location of the noncustodial parent,

request a modification of a child support order, and accept service of process. They also will be able to register for employment placement assistance programs and obtain referrals for related social services.

Three or four people will head out in the van about once a week on scheduled visits to area supermarkets, as well as to health clinics, schools, churches, hospitals, community organizations, District agencies, and special events.

And it’s off to a good start. On Feb. 5, the “maiden voyage” of the family-friendly van set out to an event in Southeast D.C. Held at a church, the event was sponsored by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia.

For more information about the Child Support Services Division’s outreach van, contact Cory Chandler at cory.chandler@dc.gov.



D.C. CSSD Director Benidia Rice (left) speaks at the event.

Does your agency sponsor a mobile outreach vehicle? Please let us know at elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov.



Creatively Connecting with Parents and Families



Creative Specialist isn't a job title that most public employees seek out. Nor do government job applications traditionally ask, "How would you improve outreach to clients so that they can understand and use our services more easily?" Yet in the past few years, your state, tribal and local child support agencies and OCSE regional offices have been creatively reaching out in ways that can have lasting, positive effects on the way we connect with our customers.

What exactly *is* creative outreach? To someone in the District of Columbia Child Support Services Division, it was noticing the mobile medical vans around the city that sparked an initiative to improve the agency's relationships with parents in low-income communities. From this "a-ha" moment, the staff found a creative use for their incentive match funds; they combined their ideas to get the best results. Take a look at the story on page 1.

On a creative roll, the D.C. office also produced a video—using themselves as actors and filmmaker—to help customers feel at ease while they learn about the program in the main-office waiting area, as well as in the new mobile outreach van. The video will be available on D.C.'s website soon. (Read all about it in next month's *Child Support Report*.)



Another example of creative outreach comes from OCSE Region VI where Texas and New Mexico staff connected with veterans at Stand Down events (see article on page 9). The D.C. staff volunteered at a

recent Stand Down as well. These occasions, created by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, offer a community-wide venue for child support staff to reach out to veterans who are homeless and who might not otherwise visit the child support office, and to help the broader community of veterans understand child support services.

On page 8, you'll see one way new media is improving outreach to customers, as the California child support agency shares its success so far with a mobile phone application.

And watch future issues of the *Child Support Report* to learn about Puerto Rico's success with placing kiosks in malls and government offices to offer interactive child support services.

Puerto Rico also plans to give brochures to recently incarcerated parents about steps they can take to modify their child support order. We see similar creative outreach methods when tribal programs place placards and brochures in public places to spread the word about child support services. Whenever we distribute brochures and other material, we can take a tip from the online [Hispanic Child Support Resource Center](#): People must see your ad at least seven times before they will acknowledge it. Repetition is key!

And that's the beauty of the child support program: we may not be able to measure creativity, but as long as we share our customer outreach ideas and practices—again and again and again—we will have the creative advantage to improve our services to customers.

Please consider inspiring others with your comments about these or other creative outreach ideas in the Commissioner's Voice [blog](#).

Vicki Turetsky



Child Support Blog
Share Your Thoughts!

Annual NCSEA Forum: Priorities, Hope and Challenge

People who attended the January policy forum of the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) said it was among the best they have attended. They learned about many positive outcomes from state initiatives and research studies that are helping to uplift families and improve responsible parenthood.

“Yet, it was more than that,” says Commissioner Vicki Turetsky. “I sensed a feeling of hope among the attendees; that despite the economic and funding challenges, the child support program is poised to deliver services in a different way and one that will best respond to the needs of today’s American families and children.”

One attendee noted the level of consensus in the audience, saying, “It feels like we are all on the same team.” In fact, that was the core message of the opening session.

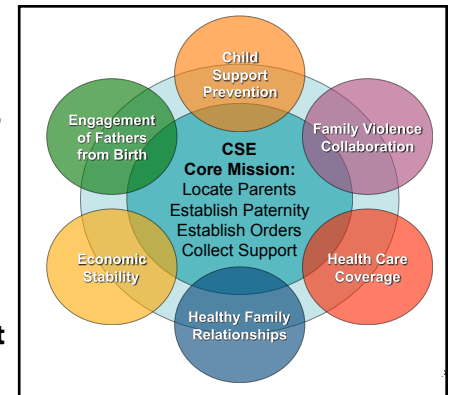
Administration for Children and Families Acting Assistant Secretary David Hansell launched the opening panel discussion, “ACF Initiatives and the Evolving Mission of Child Support,” by sharing ACF priorities for the year. They included three that involve the child support program: the Affordable Care Act, employment services to low-income parents, and responsible fatherhood. “Support doesn’t just mean money,” said he said, and explained that “the child support program has become better attuned to the entire family.”

Acting Assistant Secretary Hansell also stressed his vision for “interoperability” that, combined with technology, will meet the intersecting needs of children, families, and communities. He acknowledged the constrained program resources, but at the same time complimented the child support program for promoting family-centered services and encouraging partnerships to help strengthen American families.

Commissioner Turetsky spoke next about OCSE’s vision as it relates to ACF’s goals. She first highlighted the changes in the child support program as it has evolved from a focus on welfare cost recovery to the current focus on families and the noncustodial parent’s role. “We’ve been able to steer our own ship ... and now we are shifting to a broader family-centered mission.”



On the panel: ACF Acting Assistant Secretary David Hansell, Commissioner Vicki Turetsky, and NCSEA President Kim Newsom Bridges. The Commissioner challenged the audience to implement activities suggested in the bubble chart. See more about the chart in the [Commissioner’s Voice blog](#).



She discussed the rising level of interest in figuring out how the child support program should relate to employment services and access and visitation, even as child support programs adjust to reduced resources. The bubble chart (*above*) illustrates this shift in mission, funding, policies and strategies, and has branded the new vision, “but we need to do more,” said the Commissioner. To leverage the momentum, she challenged the audience to do two things:

- Move our program from an abstract discussion to concrete action, within our existing statutes and beyond, to implement the activities suggested by the bubble chart.
- Build on a base of a stronger, more efficient enforcement program through automation, case segmentation, staffing augmentation, and flexibility in funding and policies.

Child Support and Workforce Agencies Unite to Give 'Job Support' to San Francisco Parents

By Karen M. Roye, Director

San Francisco Department of Child Support Services



Karen M. Roye

Today I saw another parent successfully complete our "Job Support" program, and I can see the thrill of triumph of having overcome the odds against getting a job. I wish that every noncustodial parent could have this experience. I submitted this article because I believe the experience

of this parent is worth repeating, and the lessons learned by our staff are worth sharing with the greater child support community.

Last year, the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services and the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development united to create "Job Support," a program to help noncustodial parents obtain employment and improve their ability to pay child support. A three-month pilot led to this program, which gives noncustodial parents access to career centers, as well as work-readiness evaluation, employment training, and up-to-date job listings.



First Steps in Collaboration

The child support and workforce agencies began their collaboration with the understanding that they are interdependent as they both strive to best serve noncustodial parents. The workforce office has a large customer base facing barriers to employment due to child support-related issues, such as driver's license suspension, bank levies, and passport denial. Similarly, many child support agency customers have difficulty meeting their obligation due to a lack of employment.

The workforce office provides Job Support participants with services, including access to a career specialist, an interviewing skills workshop, assistance with resume and cover letter writing, and training through "Train Green," a San Francisco initiative that trains entry-level workers for green technology jobs (such as solar panel installation).

At the same time, the Department of Child Support Services provides the workforce office customers with services, including monthly workshops; one-on-one support from an agency professional; case review for additional special programs such as the Noncustodial Employment and Training Program, Compromise of Arrears Program and Job Support; assistance with child support matters in other counties; and a referral to a Family Law facilitator for custody and visitation issues.

Job Support Program Process

Job Support is an administrative program with two main functions: 1) It provides unemployed parents with more targeted assistance in obtaining employment; and 2) it reduces court hearings and judicially based orders, which can be ineffective for a parent who does not have the skills and tools needed to find employment.

Participants enroll in the Job Support program by attending orientation at one of the City's One-Stop Career Link Centers. Those who choose to enter the program are scheduled for a job-readiness evaluation and receive a One-Stop swipe card. New participants also get a compliance checklist that outlines their "work-search" duties for the next month. These duties typically include: undergoing a job-readiness evaluation; attending a resume and cover-letter workshop; seeking work at a specified

time; and meeting with child support staff members monthly.

While in the program, a participant can avoid court appearances if he or she is in compliance with the program requirements. Compliance under the program requires a participant to actively seek work or become “job ready.”

If a participant meets required duties for work-search, then he or she receives a new compliance checklist and is excused from appearing in court. A participant found not in compliance is advised that he or she is being removed from the program and that their case is being restored to the court calendar for judicial work-search review.

A participant successfully completes the program when he or she secures employment and begins payment on their child support obligations. This often requires a court determination of the current child support amount based on the participant’s new monthly income, followed by the issuance of an earnings withholding order.

Promising Results

The numbers so far are promising. Between April 1, 2010 (after the pilot was completed) and the end of December 2010:

- 65 people on average enrolled each month
- 41 participants have completed the full program
- 31 percent completed the program in 6 months
- 55 percent completed the program in 9 months

Job Support program participants are clamoring for as much job-readiness support as we can provide. Please feel free to give us a call; we would love to share more about conditions for success.

Contact Director Karen M. Roye, San Francisco Department of Child Support Services, at 415-356-2919 or Karen.Roye@sfgov.org.

Research in the News ...

Children in Poverty ...

Many states are working to increase support services to improve the health and development of young children. From the National Center for Children in Poverty, an [issue brief](#) published in the fall offers information, opportunities, and challenges that states face when developing policy initiatives to better serve their families.

Authors highlight research on how parenting can influence child outcomes, provide an overview of initiatives in four states, and provide recommendations for state policymakers and program developers when implementing programs to support families with young children.



Incarceration and Economic Mobility ...

About 1 percent of the adult population is behind bars in the United States. Some of the top challenges for many reentering offenders are financial obligations such as child support and court-related fees. Learn more in a [report](#) from Pew Charitable Trusts, “Collateral Costs: Incarceration’s Effect on Economic Mobility.”

The report addresses two questions: To what extent does incarceration create lasting barriers to economic progress for formerly incarcerated people, their families and their children? What do these barriers mean for the American Dream, given the explosive growth of the prison population?

State Services Portal: Opening Doors to Next Level of Communication

By Kathy Miller
OCSE



During an era of limited resources and budgets, state child support agencies strive for more cost effective and efficient ways to enhance their child support programs. One way is through OCSE's Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS)

State Services Portal (SSP). The SSP is taking electronic communications and effective case management to the next level while requiring minimal resources from most states to start. The SSP provides state workers with web-based access to child support services via a secure, single sign-on interface.

The first service to move onto the SSP was the Query Interstate Cases for Kids (QUICK), followed by the e-Employer Query Page and Federal Offset and Passport Denial applications in December 2010.

The e-Employer Query enables a state to look up an employer by the FEIN or name to determine if the employer is participating in e-IWO. The Federal Offset and Passport Denial applications allow users to look up offset and passport denial data. The new web applications eliminate the need to use the outdated application on the SSA mainframe.

Getting Started

There is a little effort required to get started on the portal. To use the SSP, states must develop an interface (i.e., establish a proxy server and provide the user authorization roles) to connect to the SSP. But, if your state is already using the SSP or using QUICK via HTML and you want to add any of the new applications, there are just a few more steps before you are off and running!

As states using it already know, the QUICK portal provides an easy-to-navigate, user-friendly tool that returns information almost instantly, and the features of the new offset and passport applications are no exception.

Just a few of the many advantages to the Federal Offset and Passport Denial web applications, compared to the Time Sharing Option applications, include:

- No more SSA hardware dependency
- No more SSA pre-approval required for access (goodbye SSA Form 120s!)
- No more green screens
- Two levels of user access available for both applications
- Efficient and intuitive interface, quick tabs to obtain case data without having to re-enter information
- Improved functionality including one-step update submittals of case data
- Users can enter passport success stories right from the passport denial page
- Real-time access to offset and passport denial data
- Much more information available at a glance

Positive Reviews

Many states are already reaping the benefits the SSP offers. Now there are 25 QUICK states and several more are in final stages of development. In addition, several states, including Florida, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Dakota are using the new offset and passport applications.

Early reviews of the offset and passport applications are in, and feedback has been positive. One user commented that the new applications are "as slick as a whistle!" while another said they are much easier to view and use than the old screens. OCSE also is working with other states in developing access, and more than a dozen states report they plan to implement before the end of the year!

New This Year

The good news on the portal front continues in 2011 with at least three more applications expected to be available by mid-year: Online Locate, NDNH Employer Information, and Department of Defense Entitlement Data for Active and Reserve Military.

See more details about the SSP at the SSP/QUICK Workplace. Contact the Help Desk at 800-258-2736 or CSENet.2000@lmco.com for additional information.

Mobile Web Applications—a Growing Trend in Government

California Child Support Services Launches Phone Locator App

By Randy Juster

California Department of Child Support Services

To make accessing child support services as convenient as possible, the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) has created a new application—Mobile Office Locator—that enables smartphone users to get the location of their local child support agency while on the go. On phones that display GoogleMaps, the local agency's location is displayed graphically as well.

When a smartphone user visits the DCSS public website, the mobile application detects the mobile user and displays a simplified menu, which offers Office Locator and links to the DCSS Facebook and Twitter sites. There is also a contact option with toll-free, bilingual and TTY numbers that can be automatically dialed by many smartphones.

Version 1 of the application has been well received, with visits averaging 30,000 per month. DCSS will soon launch version 2, which has an updated interface and uses location-aware algorithms, making it possible to locate the closest child support office by entering the user's zip code.

For further information, contact Randy Juster, Outreach and Education Coordinator at randy.juster@dcss.ca.gov.



'Your Agency's Mission is the Goal'

Mobile development and the delivery of information to mobile users is an emerging and quickly evolving field. The Department of Health and Human Services is among the federal agencies developing applications for mobile phones as the need increases to deliver information to people on the go.

In fact, the USA.gov website opened an “app store” for government agencies last July with about 20 mobile applications, including four health-related apps. Some need to be downloaded to a phone while others can be accessed using a phone's web browser. Most of these apps are free. When it comes to developing mobile apps, according to one government expert, agencies should focus primarily on what they are trying to accomplish with a mobile strategy. “The mobile app is not the goal. Your agency's mission is the goal.”

Read more about mobile applications and other new media throughout the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at the [HHS Center for New Media](http://HHS.CenterforNewMedia).

Mobile App for Women Turns One

A happy and healthy public-private partnership celebrated its first birthday on Feb. 4. text4baby is a free text-messaging service designed to promote maternal and child health. The service delivers timely health information during pregnancy and through a baby's first year.

Women can sign up for the service by texting BABY (or



BEBE for Spanish) to 511411.

In the year since its launch, 135,000 subscribers have received millions of texts. More than 300 outreach partners, including federal, state, business, academic and nonprofit groups are helping to promote the service. Read more about the application's success at whitehouse.gov.

'Stand Down' Events Serve Veterans in Albuquerque and Dallas



From left are Amanda Francia, Social Community Services Coordinator, New Mexico Child Support Enforcement Division; LaMonica Wooten and Reta Oliver, OCSE Region VI; and Debra Taylor, Constituent Services Supervisor, New Mexico Child Support Enforcement Division. The division was represented again this year at Albuquerque's annual Stand Down Hands Up event, last October, to answer questions from veterans about child support services. Federal, state, tribal, nonprofit and local government agencies, including the New Mexico National Guard and Air Guard, collaborated to sponsor the two-day event, which served more than 1,000 of the homeless population, half of whom are veterans. All veterans received military surplus clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, winter jackets, sleep shirts, duffle bags and backpacks. All attendees, including children, received jackets, pants, underwear, socks, and a pair of shoes; children also received toys. All were offered a haircut, shower, flu shot, and meals.



More than 587 veterans attended the 2010 Stand Down for Homeless Veterans in Dallas, a two-day event last November. LaMonica Wooten (OCSE Region VI office) and Sharon Butler (Regional Administrator's office), worked with the Homeless Programs Office of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to prepare for the event. It provided outreach and support services, including food, personal care, legal services, counseling, and a job fair, shown above.

Child Support Report



Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality digital photos. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length. Contents are for informational purposes only; no official endorsement of any practice, publication, or individual by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Child Support Enforcement is intended. Use of this material is welcomed; please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

David A. Hansell
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Vicki Turetsky
Commissioner, OCSE

Gabrielle Pagin
Director, Division of Consumer Services

Elaine Blackman
Editor
202-401-5353
elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov



Learn more about the VA **Stand Down**, and see a **list** of 2011 Stand Down events around the country.